



Lessons Learned On the Road to Plain Language

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Destination: Plain Language

Removal of radio codes and ten-codes in radio communications, and replacing them with plain language.

“The ability to communicate within ICS (Incident Command System) is absolutely critical and using standard or common terminology is essential to ensuring efficient, clear communication. ICS requires the use of common terminology; that is, the use of plain English.”

Source: http://www.nimsonline.com/nims_faq.htm#14f



Roadmap: **Mesa's Plan**

Remove event codes and 10-codes from most
Internal and Inter-Agency communications.
Use clear, concise, plain language.

- ▶ Verbal Communications
 - Brief
 - Professional
 - Accurate
- ▶ Written Communications



Roadmap: **Mesa's Plan**

Why Not Just Inter-Agency?

“While the NIMS Integration Center does not require plain language for internal operations, it strongly encourages it, as it is important to practice everyday terminology and procedures that will need to be used in emergency incidents and disasters.”

Source: FEMA NIMS Alert, 12/19, 2008



Roadmap: **Mesa's Plan**

Day to Day Use is Practical

- ▶ Under stress, officers revert to what is familiar to them
- ▶ Plain Language will be effective under stress when it becomes a habit
- ▶ Successful transition to Plain Language requires use day-to-day

Source: Northern Virginia Common Language Inter-Agency Work-Group



Destination: **Plain Language**

September 8, 2008, Mesa
Police Department
implemented
Plain Language.



Lessons Learned

✓ Plain is not Simple

✓ Buying-in without Selling Out

✓ Fight Fright with Facts



Lesson 1: Problem

✖ Plain is not Simple

- ✖ Sounds simple – but can be misleading
- ✖ Many will think transition is a “no-brainer”
- ✖ Will require preparation and training



Lesson 1: Solution

✓ Simplifying

- ✓ Begin with the end in mind
- ✓ Replacement phrases for common codes
 - ☑ Clear message
 - ☑ Concise
 - ☑ Professional
- ✓ Reassess and adjust as needed



Lesson 2: **Problem**

✖ Buying-in means Selling Out

- ✖ Heart of each agency's culture
- ✖ Separates good guys from bad guys
- ✖ Makes your agency different from another
- ✖ Police different from Fire



Lesson 2: **Solution**

✓ **Buying-in** without **Selling Out**

- ✓ Retain identity
- ✓ Create a new identity
 - ☑ Embrace the vernacular that emerges
 - ☑ Recognize comfort codes and develop acceptable alternatives
- ✓ Reward and market success



Lesson 3: Problem

✖ Fear

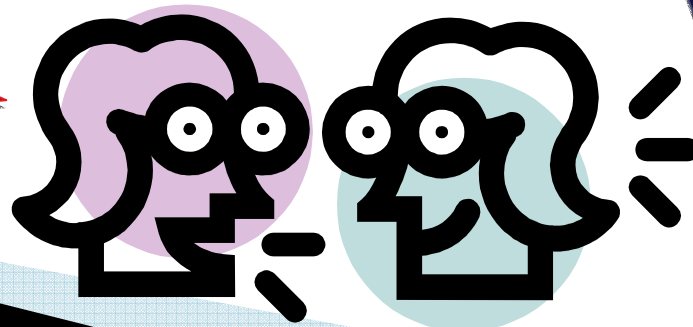
✖ Talk to stakeholders

✖ Be open to questions and challenges

✖ Listen to concerns

“Plain
Language will
take more
airtime!”

“I know!
And it is
DANGEROUS!”



Lesson 3: **Solution**

✓ **Fight Fright with Facts**

- ✓ Recognize and reward critical thinking
 - ☑ Market fears, facts and findings
- ✓ Develop mitigation strategies
 - ☑ Solicit input
 - ☑ Incorporate solutions
- ✓ Try it out
 - ☑ Soft implementation period



Are we there yet?

- ▶ Codes and Plain Language are used in Mesa
- ▶ Plain Language becomes an apparent issue in each interoperable operation
 - Mesa Officers know when to use
 - More importantly – Mesa Officers know *how* to use Plain Language



Next Stop: **Interoperability**

Join us on the journey.

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